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ERS NEWSLETTER

A Bimonthly Newsletter for Economic Research Service Employees and Colleagues

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, DC

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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1988

ERS Cosponsors Regional Agricultural Outlook Seminar

Over 60 leaders from agribusiness, financial organizations, the academic community, and State extension services in the upper Midwest were briefed by ERS economists at an agricultural outlook seminar in Chicago. Sponsored by ERS, the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank, and the Farm Foundation, the seminar focused on factors likely to shape major commodity markets over the next 12–18 months.

Providing a general overview as well as detailed perspectives on the outlook for grains, oilseeds, and livestock were ERS economists James Cole, John Ginzler, Gregory Hanson, Roger Hoskin, and Ralph Monaco. USDA Assistant Secretary for Economics Ewen Wilson introduced the seminar, while ERS associate administrator Bob Robinson gave the closing summary. Patrick O'Brien, director of ERS's Commodity Economics Division, served as session moderator.

ERS Cosponsors Workshop on Farmland Loss in Urbanizing Areas

Eighty-five persons—including economists, planners, Federal, State, and local government officials, and representatives of farmland retention groups—attended a workshop on the loss of agricultural land to urban issues. ERS, the Farm Foundation, and the American Land Resources Association cosponsored the workshop.

ERS economists Marlow Vesterby and Douglas Brooks presented new data on land-use changes in 135 counties that grew rapidly and 56 counties that lost large amounts of cropland during the 1970's. ERS researchers Ralph Heimlich and Robert Reining outlined Federal research and information-gathering efforts in studying urbanization, focusing on ERS's research. Other workshop sessions summarized national and local concerns about urban conversion, examined the impacts of urbanization on agricultural investment and land values, surveyed prospects for evaluating the effectiveness of alternative farmland retention programs, and discussed potential roles for the Federal Government in monitoring and studying conversion of rural land to urban uses.

The workshop was the first national conference on farmland conversion since the National Agricultural Lands Study in 1981.

For more information, contact Ralph Heimlich (786-1419).

When It Doesn't Rain, It Pours

Because of widespread drought conditions in June and July, ERS has been deluged with requests for information about the effects of the drought on food prices, marketing margins, and costs of commodity and other agricultural programs. The requests come from familiar and unfamiliar directions: the mass media, government, the general public, agricultural community, and USDA officials and staff.

Current Research

ERS Researchers Find a Surprise in Export Trends

ERS economists Stephen MacDonald and Stephen Milmo (786-1822) report that, while total U.S. agricultural exports fell 34 percent between 1981 and 1987 to \$28.6 billion, exports of value-added products (VAP's) (such as peanut butter, fresh vegetables, and processed beef) were nearly steady and are now approaching record levels. Moreover, the VAP share of U.S. agricultural exports jumped from 30 percent in 1981 to 42 percent in 1987, as bulk grain and oilseed exports declined.

Until the 1980's, promoting exports meant promoting sales of wheat, corn, and soybeans. Since then, more attention has been paid to exports of value-added products. Still, MacDonald and Milmo's analysis shows that, despite the performance of VAP's in U.S. trade, the United States actually lost global market share to the European Community and other countries, such as Brazil.

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To separate and track trends in agricultural trade, MacDonald and Milmo created a new classification system based on the amount of transformation a product undergoes. Only then did they uncover the surprising performance of VAP's, using data from the United Nations, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, and U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Secondary Markets for Farm Mortgages Studied

ERS researchers Stephen Hiemstra (786-1897) and Steven Koenig are analyzing the effects of creating a secondary market for farm mortgage loans. Their findings show that the success of a secondary market depends critically on the number of mortgage loans in the pool. Implications are that underwriting standards and the participation of the Farm Credit System (which originates a large share of all farm mortgage loans) substantially affect performance of the market. Qualifying borrowers will probably see lower interest rates when credit supplies are adequate and increased access to credit when supplies are tight. Nonqualifying borrowers may also benefit indirectly through improved credit pricing and lender liquidity.

Will "Workfare" Work?

In recent years, some people have been increasingly concerned that Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) fosters dependency among its recipients. While this contention remains hotly debated, it has given rise to Congressional welfare reform

proposals that place greater emphasis on gainful employment as a means of escaping poverty.

A key feature of these proposals is "workfare," which seeks to reduce welfare dependency by providing training and employment search services to welfare clients and by requiring them to seek and obtain a job. Although workfare would be expensive, initial losses should be recouped over time by shorter welfare rolls and greater revenues from income taxes, provided enough jobs are available to put welfare clients to work.

ERS researchers Leonard Bloomquist (786-1552) and Leif Jensen and Ruy Teixeira (Abt Associates) are assessing the number of jobs available for welfare clients. Their preliminary findings show that, under current economic conditions, the number of welfare clients who would be expected to work would far exceed the number of available jobs, even without including the unemployed among the pool of job seekers. Their assessment is somewhat less pessimistic in nonmetro areas of the country. They find that the ratio of job seekers to available jobs would be about 14 to 1 in metro areas and 9 to 1 in nonmetro areas.

Agricultural Productivity Measures Revamped

ERS economists are developing new procedures for measuring agricultural productivity. On the input side, the new measures adopt a different procedure for weighting factor prices that reduce problems in comparing periods with wide price changes. On the output side, major revisions are aimed at making ERS output measures more consistent with national account measures used by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis. The old output indices

were based on crop-year production weighted by season-average market prices. The new indices are calculated using calendar-year marketings, including unredeemed Commodity Credit Corporation loans plus changes in farmer-owned inventories and quantities consumed on farms weighted by calendar-year average prices adjusted to reflect direct payments to producers under USDA commodity programs.

ERS researchers also are developing new labor productivity indices that reflect changes in the quality of the farm labor force. These indices incorporate data on demographic and occupational characteristics that indicate differences in skills levels, and they can be constructed for hired, self-employed, and unpaid family labor. For more information, contact Eldon Ball (786-1459).

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Administrator's Letter – Power of Transparency

People act on what they perceive to be true. If their perceptions are accurate, their actions are more likely to be appropriate. Likewise, public policy is driven by perceptions of both past and current events and of likely outcomes of specific courses of action. In either the case of private business decisions or public policy decisions, the outcomes are likely to be unsatisfactory if the perceptions don't square with reality.



What does this have to do with ERS? The premise underlying the existence of ERS is that accurate, timely information can improve the quality of private and public decisions, thereby improving the performance of the agricultural and rural economies. Thus, the ERS program focuses on providing information about supply, demand, and price conditions and expectations for commodity and factor markets, technological changes, rural and agricultural economies, and likely outcomes of alternative courses of policy action. In a sense, the mission of ERS is to equip people with more informed perceptions about agriculture and with greater understanding of cause-and-effect relationships in agricultural and rural economies. We share that mission with other publicly employed economists and other social scientists.

Market situation and outlook analyses, along with statistical information and analyses of issues, provide a widely available information base as a counter to rumors, misleading anecdotal information, and deliberate misinformation. Such analyses don't guarantee that all market participants are equally well informed or that markets will perform perfectly, but they contribute significantly to those objectives, and they help level the playing field among market participants.

Sometimes simple, accurate information can have a powerful impact. Near hysteria a few years ago about the perceived threat of foreign takeover of U.S. farmland led to the collection of data about land ownership. The subsequent ERS annual reports confirming that foreign interests control less than 1 percent of U.S. farm and timber lands defused the hysteria over that issue. As another example, our persistence in pointing out that most of the rural economy is not farm-based has slowly but surely increased public awareness that many problems of the rural economy cannot be solved with traditional farm commodity programs.

An additional information function is that of providing the best possible analyses of the likely outcomes of alternative courses of policy actions, including existing policies. By making "transparent" the levels and incidence of impacts on all parties affected, policymakers and their constituents can weigh the courses of action open to them with greater objectivity and effectiveness. Without such information, policies tend to get made in an atmosphere of misinformation, conflicting claims by various special interest groups, and "facts" that cannot be supported with objective information. In such cases, several undesirable outcomes can occur: benefits captured by special interests to the detriment of other groups or of the larger society; unintended or detrimental side effects from achieving the original policy or program objective; and longer term outcomes contrary to the original intent of the policy.

I believe that making "transparent" the consequences of present and alternative policies and programs is consistent with—and is perhaps the essence of—Don Paarlberg's charge that ERS be the "...honest mirror to agriculture and rural America." Obviously, honest analysis is potentially sensitive and risky. But that simply means that such work has to be thorough, professional, and comprehensive. Communicating sensitive information requires good judgment and effective use of "windows of opportunity" and "teachable moments."

Conducting "transparency" research does not mean that the researcher becomes an advocate (other than for good information). However, because some researcher biases are inevitable, policy analysis should be done in a variety of institutions and should be open to full professional scrutiny. That scrutiny should cover sins of omission as well as commission.

Accurate information must be effectively and widely communicated if it is to be useful. Ineffective communication is one of our greatest failings as a profession. Certainly only a tiny fraction of the information contained in our data bases and accumulated research findings is commonly known and understood by policymakers and the public generally. Broad public understanding of information we can provide is critical because history is full of examples of informed policymakers who confront strongly held but uninformed views of their constituents.

Again, the most powerful tool for effective public policy and improved market performance is accurate information, including a clear understanding by all parties involved of the consequences of alternative actions. Providing that information is the most exciting opportunity and one of the highest priority responsibilities of ERS and our publicly employed colleagues in universities and elsewhere. Everything else we do should be a means to that end.


John Lee

Personnel Notes

Aldrich Named CED Deputy Director



Lorna Aldrich is the new deputy director for staff analysis, Commodity Economics Division. For

the past year, she has served as CED assistant director for staff analysis coordination.

In 1986, Aldrich was leader of the former Situation and Outlook Section, Western Europe Branch, International Economics Division. During 1983-86, she worked in the Current Business Analysis Division, U.S. Dept. of Commerce. During 1980-83, Aldrich was the economics editor of *Agricultural Outlook*, for which she received an ERS Administrator's Special Merit Award. In 1983, she was coeditor of *Agricultural Economics Research*.

Prior to joining ERS in 1980, Aldrich held positions at the U. of Texas (Austin) in its Dept. of Economics, Bureau of Business Research, and Center for Energy Studies. While at the U. of Texas, she authored numerous reports and articles on economic developments in the United States.

Aldrich has a B.A. in sociology from Rutgers U., an M.A. in economics from Michigan State U., and a Ph.D. in economics from the U. of Texas (Austin).

Ervin Is New RTD Branch Chief



David Ervin is the new chief, Resource Policy Branch, Resources and Technology

Division. Immediately prior to joining ERS in July 1988, Ervin was professor and director of graduate studies at the U. of Missouri (Columbia).

During 1986-87, Ervin spent a year's development leave from the U. of Missouri at the Dept. of Land Economy, Cambridge U., U.K. Before joining the U. of Missouri faculty in 1977, Ervin was a research associate with the Dept. of Agricultural and Resource Economics at Oregon State U.

Ervin has done research on the economics of land use control, soil conservation, farmland taxation, energy, and cropland diversion for conservation. His numerous publications include journal articles, research reports, chapters in books, and a book, *Land Use Control: Evaluating Economic and Political Effects*.

Ervin has a B.S. and an M.S. in agricultural economics from Ohio State U. and a Ph.D. from Oregon State U.

Hyde Is New RTD Branch Chief



William Hyde is the new chief, Soil and Water Branch, Resources and Technology Division.

Before joining ERS in June 1988, Hyde was associate professor of resource economics and acting director of the Center for Resource and Environmental Policy Research, Duke U. Hyde concurrently has been an associate with Winrock International since 1986, where he organized a South and Southeast Asian regionwide network of research in land tenure and social forestry. During 1978-86, he was associate director of a forest policy project for the Northwest Regional Commission. During 1974-78, Hyde was a senior research associate at Resources for the

Future working on forest policy research. In 1973, Hyde was a visiting assistant professor at the Institute for Renewable Natural Resources, U. of New Hampshire.

Hyde has published widely on U.S. public lands, particularly forestry; public intervention in forestry markets; technical change and research evaluation in forestry; and forest and rural development in developing Third World countries, mostly in Asia. He is the author of *Timber Supply, Land Allocation and Economic Efficiency*.

Hyde has an A.B. and M.A., both in economics and international service from American U., and an M.S. in natural resources and a Ph.D. in economics from the U. of Michigan.

Miller Is New CED Section Leader



James Miller is the new leader, Dairy Analysis Section, Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Branch,

Commodity Economics Division.

Since joining ERS in 1974, Miller has been responsible for work on dairy production, technology, and policy. Miller's research has included studying the impacts of ultrahigh-temperature milk on the dairy industry. He is a well-known spokesperson for ERS and USDA at dairy conferences, interagency committees, and working groups concerning U.S. dairy developments and issues. Prior to joining ERS, he served with the Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.

Miller has a B.S. and an M.S. in agricultural economics from the U. of Illinois and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Purdue U.

Reilly Named RTD Section Leader



John Reilly is the new leader, Technology and Research Assessment Section, inputs,

Technology, and Productivity Branch, Resources and Technology Division.

Reilly joined ERS in 1986 and became leader of the Land Values Section, Land Branch, in 1987. He previously worked for Pacific Northwest Laboratories, Battelle Memorial Institute, Oak Ridge Associated Universities, and the U.S. Depts. of Energy and Transportation.

Reilly has published numerous articles on technology, land, and national and international resource issues. He is also author of *Global Energy: Assessing the Future*. His areas of work at ERS have included cost-reducing and output-enhancing technologies, economic and policy tradeoffs in the production of ethanol, and land values.

Reilly has a B.S. in economics and political science from the U. of Wisconsin, and an M.S. and a Ph.D. in economics from the U. of Pennsylvania.

Skinner Is New CED Section Leader



Robert Skinner is the new leader, Fibers Analysis Section, Crops Branch,

Commodity Economics Division.

Skinner joined ERS's former National Economics Division in 1986 as a cotton analyst and coordinator of the *Cotton and Wool Situation and Outlook Report*. Prior to joining ERS, he was an economist for the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, with primary responsibilities in grain marketing and outlook. His experience also includes an assignment with USDA's Agricultural Cooperative Service during 1979-84, where he did research on grain, fruit, and vegetable marketing cooperatives.

Skinner received a B.S. and an M.S. in agricultural economics from Southern Illinois U. (Carbondale), and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Texas A&M U.

Young Is New CED Section Leader



Edwin Young is the new leader, Food Grains Analysis Section, Crops Branch, Commodity

Economics Division.

Young joined ERS's former Natural Resource Economics Division in 1974 and was stationed at Pennsylvania State U. until 1985. In Pennsylvania, Young did research on the economics of applying municipal wastewater to farmland and, in 1981, was named project leader for economic evaluations of Northeast projects under the Rural Clean Water Program. In Washington, D.C., he expanded his research on the benefits of reducing onfarm and offsite damages from soil erosion.

Young became a section leader in the former Conservation Economics Branch in 1986 and was

subsequently named leader of the Program and Policy Analysis Section, Resource Policy Branch. His most recent responsibilities included coordinating an ERS study of mandatory supply control programs, analyzing the effects of the Small Reclamation Loan Program of the U.S. Dept. of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, and evaluating the Conservation Reserve Program of the Food Security Act of 1985.

Young's research has earned him five ERS Administrator's Special Merit Awards. He has published widely on water quality, soil erosion, and conservation policy.

Young has a B.S. in economics from Westminster College (New Wilmington, Pa.) and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in economics from North Carolina State U.

ERS Alumni News

[We invite ERS alumni to write us at the address on page 2 about what they or other alumni are doing, where they are living, etc.]

Former ERS Administrator **Louis Upchurch** now lives at 419 Olympia Fields, Marble Falls, TX 78654

• former ERS Administrator **Quentin West** is an agricultural adviser in Quito, Ecuador, for Sigma One Corporation, P.O. Box 12425, Raleigh, NC 27605 • **West** also was awarded the Inter-American Agricultural Medal for outstanding contribution to the development of agriculture and the improvement of rural life • **Wayne Rasmussen**, ERS historian emeritus, was recently awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters, U. of Montana • and former ERS economist **Joe Scoville** organized the John D. Black Appreciation Club and raised the contributions necessary to have the club chartered by the American Agricultural Economics Association Foundation.

Highlights of Staff Activities

Agriculture and Rural Economy Division

Ronald Babula participated in a symposium on Farm Policy for a Freer Trade World, in Quebec, Que. • **Herman Bluestone** briefed development officials from Senegal • **Kenneth Deavers** spoke on "Rural Economic Development: Why Bother?" and **Leonard Bloomquist** presented a paper (coauthored with **David McGranahan**), "Potential Contribution of the Manufacturing Sector to Rural Economic Development," at a meeting of the Federal Reserve System Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, in New Orleans, La. • **Kenneth Hanson** presented a paper (coauthored with **Sherman Robinson**), "Equilibrium and Disequilibrium in Economy-Wide Microsimulation Models," at a conference on quantitative models of economic behavior, at the U. of Wisconsin • **Maureen Kilkenny** and **Sherman Robinson** presented a paper, "Removing Distortions in U.S. Agriculture: A CGE Analysis," at a conference on Agriculture and the GATT: Policy and Modelling Issues, at the U. of Western Ontario • and **Michael Salassi** presented a paper (coauthored with **Dargon Glaze**), "Comparison of the Financial Structure and Performance of High Cost and Low Cost Rice Farms," at a meeting of a rice technical working group, in Davis, Calif.

Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division

Barbara Chatten, Ricardo Krajewski, Barry Krissoff, Maurice

Landes, Carl Mabbs-Zeno, Myles Mielke, and Sherman Robinson (ARED) briefed Amalia Martinez Christensen (Centro de Economía Internacional, Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs) on producer-subsidy-equivalent methodology, ERS's SWOPSIM model, and computable general equilibrium models • **Nancy Cochrane, Christian Foster, and Ricardo Krajewski** briefed Argentine Agricultural Counselor Manuel Otero on Latin American agricultural trade with Eastern Europe • **John Dunmore** discussed U.S. agricultural policy and regulation/deregulation of domestic and international markets with Rolf Bennink (Directorate General for Agriculture, Commission of the European Communities) • **Richard Kennedy** prepared a U.S. position paper on malnourished children for the World Food Council Secretariat's background report, "Global State of Hunger and Malnutrition," in Nicosia, Cyprus • **Ray Nightingale and Leslie Ross** met with staff from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Dept. of State, and the International Monetary Fund on Vietnam's deteriorating agricultural situation and its recent request for food aid • and **John Parker** gave a presentation on agribusiness and trade opportunities in Saudi Arabia and Iraq and the effect of the Gulf Cooperation Council on agricultural trade, at a GULFAMERICA Conference in Houston, Tex.

Commodity Economics Division

Lorna Aldrich outlined ERS research initiatives at a Northeast Regional Council meeting, in Rosslyn, Va. • **Edward Allen** and **Joy Harwood** participated in an evaluation of the hard red winter

wheat crop in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Colorado • **Amy Allred** discussed research developments with the president of the National Watermelon Growers Association, in Salisbury, Md. • **Nicole Ballenger** was interviewed for the TV program "A Better Way" on the developing countries' stake in General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations • **Richard Brown, Boyd Buxton, and John Parker** (ATAD) discussed future markets for horticultural crops with U.S. Agency for International Development and horticultural industry representatives, in Rosslyn, Va. • **Buxton, Catherine Greene, Shannon Hamm, and Frederic Hoff** gave presentations on trends and trade in fruits and vegetables at a meeting of the Joint Council on Food and Agricultural Sciences, in Rosslyn, Va. • at a rice technical working group meeting in Davis, Calif., **Nathan Childs** presented two papers, "U.S. Rice Distribution Patterns: A Preliminary Report," and "Comparison of Costs of Production by State and Grain Type: 1980 - 1986," **William Lin** presented a paper, "Marketing Loan for Rice: How Does It Perform and Who Benefits?," and **Janet Livezey** and **Sara Schwartz** presented a paper, "World Rice Situation" • **Childs** also participated in a regional research meeting on the performance of the U.S. grain marketing system, in New York, N.Y. • **Lee Christensen** discussed possible solutions to depressed egg prices with egg producers, processors, and industry staff • **Annette Clauson** and **Frederic Hoff** met with sugarbeet growers on plans for the 1988 ERS Farm Costs and Returns Survey • at a Northeast Agricultural and Resource Economics Association meeting in Orono, Maine, **Bradley Crowder** presented a paper, "Evaluating Surface and Groundwater Contamination Potentials in the Northeastern U.S.," and **Kuo Huang** presented a paper,

"Forecasting Model for Food and Other Expenditures" • **Michael Dicks, Bengt Hyberg, and Tom Hebert** (RTD) evaluated conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, at Great Plains Agricultural Council meetings in Denver, Colo., and Las Cruces, N. Mex. • **Edward Glade** participated in an Atlantic Cotton Association meeting of cotton merchants and textile mill buyers, in Destin, Fla. • **Glade** also reviewed USDA and industry cotton pricing and price reporting proposals at an American Cotton Shippers Association meeting in Dallas, Tex. • **Joseph Glauber** participated in a seminar on futures markets at the Chicago Board of Trade • **Verner Grise** discussed tobacco price support and production control programs with tobacco farmers and county health directors at a National Association of Counties meeting • **Grise** also spoke on the tobacco situation and outlook at a tobacco warehouse association meeting in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and on the demand for U.S. cigarettes, at a tobacco leaf dealers association meeting in Lexington, Ky. • **Ronald Gustafson** met with representatives of embassies of major beef exporting countries, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and U.S. Dept. of State concerning meat import levels • **Harry Harp, Richard Heifner, and Lester Myers** discussed commodity and food pricing and product flow coordination in the U.S. food and fiber system with the U.S.S.R. agricultural attaché • **David Harvey** participated in meetings in Charles County, Md., on the feasibility of developing aquaculture in Maryland and Virginia and participated in an aquaculture conference and trade show in Orlando, Fla. • **Frederic Hoff, Gary Lucier, and Glenn Zepp** conferred with U.S. Agency for International Development staff on common interests in research on competition among the United

States, Mexico, and selected Latin American countries in fruit and vegetable production • **T.Q. Hutchinson** presented a paper on rail rates and grain marketing in the 1990's at a grain conference in New Orleans, La. • **Allen Johnson** briefed a government official from Beijing, China, and reporters from Japanese newspapers on the outlook for U.S. agriculture and food consumption trends • **Doyle Johnson** discussed ERS's research program on fruit and vegetable production and marketing at a regional research committee meeting in Bangor, Maine • **Phillip Kaufman** was interviewed by a USDA radio reporter on trends and developments in food retailing • **John Lawler** participated in a conference on new developments in the fibers industry, in Greenville, S.C. • **William Levedahl, Masao Matsumoto, and David Smallwood** discussed U.S. domestic food assistance programs with an official of the Institute Agronomique Méditerranéen, Montpellier, France • **Matsumoto and Smallwood** also discussed the economics of the use of antibiotics in animal feed with representatives of the Food and Drug Administration • **Harold Linstrom** served on a U.S. Dept. of Interior technical assistance team advising the Brazilian Government on the marketing of products from newly developed irrigated land in Brazil's Northeast • **Lester Myers** is chairing a committee of the American Agricultural Economics Association to evaluate *Choices* magazine • **Myers** also gave a paper, "Consumer Demand for Dairy Products," at a Minnesota dairy policy conference in St. Paul, Minn. • **Tanya Roberts** discussed economic implications of salmonellosis at an American Society for Microbiology meeting in Miami, Fla. • **Mark Smith** discussed effects of agricultural export programs with U.S. Office of Management and Budget staff • **Smith** also presented a paper on

relationships between U.S. agricultural policies and global food security, at Colgate U. • and **Smith** presented a paper on the effects of farm, trade, and food aid policies on U.S. food aid programs, at a Congressional Research Service workshop.

Resources and Technology Division

At a Northeast Agricultural and Resource Economics Association meeting in Orono, Maine, **Stephen Crutchfield** presented a paper, "Controlling Agricultural Externalities: Economic Implications of Environmental Policy," and **Marc Ribaud** presented a paper, "Offsite Water Quality Benefits from Buffer Strips" • at a Western Economic Association meeting in Los Angeles, Calif., **Roy Boyd** chaired a symposium on new approaches to problems in forest economics, **Thomas Holmes** presented a paper, "Timber Supply with Attribute Adjusted Prices," and **Sally Kane** presented a paper, "Monopsony Pricing and Competition in a Central Appalachian Hardwood Stumpage Market" • **Leonard Bull, Herman Delvo, and Harold Taylor** participated in an Objective Yield Workshop sponsored by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, in Memphis, Tenn. • **Cheryl Christensen** participated in and **Katherine Reichelderfer** presented a paper, "Assessment of Economic Consequences of Biotechnology," at a USDA-sponsored conference on Agricultural Biotechnology and the Public, in Minneapolis, Minn. • **Stephen Crutchfield, Richard Magleby, and Parveen Setia** discussed economic efficiency of microtargeting conservation programs, with Environmental Protection Agency staff • **Setia** also discussed methods to determine

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optimal soil erosion under uncertainty and alternative production systems, at a U.S. Agency for International Development conference at Purdue U. • **Thomas Hebert, John Hostettler, and Michael Dicks** (CED) discussed the conservation impacts of the Food Security Act of 1985 and other Federal water quality legislation, at a Great Plains Council meeting in Las Cruces, N. Mex. • at a Western Agricultural Economics Association meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, **Wen Huang** presented a paper, "Variable Price Support Farm Program: Alternative for Supply Control," and **Glenn Schaible** presented a paper, "Water Use and Economic Benefits Associated with Enrolling Irrigated Acres into the Conservation Reserve Program in the Seventeen Western States" • **Fred Kuchler** has been detailed to

USDA's Office of Biotechnology to monitor biotechnology developments • **John Miranowski** participated in an Environmental Protection Agency conference on groundwater quality and data management, in Raleigh, N.C. • **Miranowski** also participated in a Western States Water Council meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska • **Miranowski and Katherine Reichelderfer** participated in a planning meeting of the Consortium for Research on Crop Production Systems, in Bozeman, Mont. • **Reichelderfer** also discussed the economic implications of low-input agriculture, at a Southern Extension Policy Affairs Committee meeting in Williamsburg, Va. • **George Pavelis** participated in a conference on Agriculture, Freshwater, Wetlands, and Drainage Ditches: Will They Ever be Compatible?, in Dover, Del. • **John Reilly** participated in a National Academy of Sciences workshop on Controlling and

Adapting to Greenhouse Warming • **Marc Ribaud** was interviewed about groundwater quality and potential contamination from farm chemicals and byproducts on USDA's TV show "Down to Earth" • and **Philip Szmedra** presented a paper on pest management dynamics and economics at a Society for the Advancement of Behavioral Economics conference in San Diego, Calif.

Office of the Administrator

John Lee discussed recent trends in high-value agricultural trade at an Institute of Food Technologists meeting in New Orleans, La. • **Lee** also participated in a Great Plains Agricultural Council meeting in Las Cruces, N. Mex. • and **Bob Robinson** participated in an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development meeting in Paris, France.